

come upon the scene, and in common hatred they conspire against Jesus with their traditional enemies. For a brief period, Jesus once more leaves the neighborhood of Jerusalem.

LESSON XX.

THE SYNAGOGUE.

The temple was the ideal centre of Jewish religious life, but that life really centered itself in the synagogue, where the Jews regularly assembled for worship. It became the cradle of the Christian church. The organization of the church was modeled after that of the synagogue, not of the temple. There, too, the apostles in their missionary journeys found opportunity for preaching the gospel.

ITS ORIGIN AND HISTORY—The Old Testament makes no mention of it, at least the supposed references are doubtful. It is generally agreed that it arose during the exile, compensating for the loss of the temple and its services.

Far from home, and so brought nearer to God, with no temple and no sacrifices, the Jews felt the need of some medium of instruction and worship. At first they probably met to hear the Old Testament read. Then prayers were added, and finally an address. Thus the regular services of the synagogue would arise, and the times of meeting be made to correspond with those of the temple service.

After the return from the captivity this need was still felt, for the majority of the Jews, even in Palestine, could visit Jerusalem at most but once or twice a year. Accordingly, synagogues sprang up all over the land, and in Christ's day there was no Jewish community without its meeting house for worship. The Gospels mention one at Nazareth, Luke 4:16; and another at Capernaum, Luke 4:33.

The Jews who lived outside of Palestine were more in number than those within, and the synagogue was always the token of their presence in any community. In Jerusalem, to which the scattered members of the family regularly came, it is estimated that there were upwards of four hundred, some for the natives of Palestine, some for those who

lived abroad. In Acts 6:9 Luke names the synagogue of the Cyrenians and of the Alexandrians.

The synagogue was in fact the characteristic institution of Judaism, affording in every place opportunity for prayer and study.

WORSHIP OF THE SYNAGOGUE—The building was plain and rectangular in form. The people were seated according to age, the sexes apart. They assembled on Sabbath days, on feast days, and also on market days for the convenience of the country people.

No service could be held unless ten men were present. Women were not counted as members of the congregation. A number of "elders" formed the governing body, directing the conduct of worship and controlling all matters connected with the synagogue. One of these, first among his equals, presided and was called "the ruler of the synagogue." There was also an officer who had the care of the sacred books, administered discipline and instructed the children. Still other officers collected the alms.

The services consisted of the reading of the law and the prophets, prayer and an address. The preacher might be any one whom the ruler recognized, and it was customary to invite stranger scribes to speak to the people.

The synagogue was not merely the place of worship, but virtually the school in which the first religious instruction was given. Here Jesus had often worshipped as a child, a youth and man, and here He announced His mission.

Useful hints may come from strange quarters. Dr. Haslett, in *The Pedagogical Bible School*, tells of a Roman Catholic school in Worcester, Mass., in which the sixth grade, sixteen to eighteen or nineteen years, is the Bible Class. Before graduation each student is given three months' drill in actual teaching in the Sunday-school. The students are given instruction in the principles and methods of teaching, unless they have been instructed in these elsewhere.